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SUBJECT: USNATO AMBASSADOR NULAND'S MEETING WITH SOCIALIST
PARTY INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS SECRETARY PIERRE MOSCOVICI

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Bruce Turner for reasons 1.4
(B & D).

¶1. (C) Summary and comment: Pierre Moscovici, the Socialist Party's National Secretary for International Relations, met May 29 with visiting Ambassador to NATO Nuland to discuss transatlantic relations in the context of France's 2007 presidential elections. Moscovici insisted that a PS Administration -- under a candidate yet to be selected -- would be more U.S.-friendly than Chirac, notwithstanding the greater emphasis the PS would place on "Europeanizing" French foreign policy. France and the U.S. should strive for agreement whenever possible, he asserted, even if France can never be like the UK -- what he described as "neither Chirac nor Blair" -- and should continue talking even when they don't agree. He welcomed the warming in transatlantic relations since President Bush's visit to Brussels in 2005 but insisted that divisions between the U.S. and Europe would remain, given continuing French concerns about U.S. "unilateralist tendencies." The meeting sent a useful signal that the U.S. is eager to engage both sides of the political aisle on NATO issues, even if Moscovici tended to see the transatlantic relationship in terms of the U.S. and the EU. End summary and comment.

¶2. (C) In a May 29 meeting with visiting Ambassador to NATO Victoria Nuland, Socialist Party (PS) National Secretary for International Affairs Pierre Moscovici discussed the likely positions of a PS administration on transatlantic relations if the Socialist candidate wins the 2007 presidential elections, while making clear that he could not speak authoritatively for the eventual PS presidential candidate. Acknowledging at the outset that he was personally close to former Finance Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn, Moscovici described the candidate selection in November -- to be determined through a vote among the party's rank and file -- as a contest between a popular front-runner (Segolene Royal), an outsider (former prime minister Lionel Jospin) and two insiders (in particular Strauss-Kahn and former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius). Moscovici judged that the PS had a 50-50 chance of winning the elections.

¶3. (C) Moscovici noted the first anniversary of France's rejection of the EU constitutional treaty. While he rejected the notion that the French "no" was the cause of the current crisis in Europe, it had nonetheless deepened an already existing crisis. He did not expect a renegotiation of the treaty until after the 2007 elections, explaining that President Chirac's lame-duck status and damaged credibility precluded meaningful initiatives in the interim. Moscovici attributed French unease with EU enlargement as perhaps the major factor in the treaty's rejection, saying that enlargement had proceeded too quickly and without sufficient debate. Even if one argued that enlargement was "good," it could not substitute for the absence of a tangible "project." As a vice-president in the European Parliament, he felt he could nonetheless state with relative certainty that Romania

and Bulgaria would join the EU in 2007, although this would not occur without some difficult debate.

¶4. (C) Turning to U.S.-EU relations, Moscovici regretted what he called a wrong U.S. decision to invade Iraq, but he welcomed the U.S. stress on renewed partnership since 2005. That said, he believed that "unilateral" strains in U.S. thinking, combined with divisiveness among the Europeans, meant that some frictions in the transatlantic relationship would continue. The EU was more regionally focused, he judged, as compared with the more global vision of the U.S. All that said, it was important for all to understand that the U.S. and Europe had no better allies than each other, so it was important to make the best of the relationship. There was no other real choice.

¶5. (C) Moscovici asserted that the PS leadership was favorably disposed toward the U.S. and described the PS as ultimately less anti-American than Chirac. While it was likely to be tougher on questions of principle, he judged that the PS would be more flexible in practice. He described Chirac as a dogmatist who had pandered too much to domestic opinion, and accused Chirac of actively working against the U.S. in the run-up to the Iraq war and threatening a veto "too early," before the UN had had an opportunity to explore all possible avenues. Although the PS was also opposed to the Iraq war, he contended that, unlike Chirac, it also would not have broken off dialogue with the U.S. Moscovici claimed that, historically, French-U.S. relations had been strongest when the left was in power, primarily because the PS did not hold certain negative attitudes toward the U.S. The PS, he said, would base its relations with the U.S. on cool-headed analysis rather than emotion, taking into account the bedrock values the Europe and America share.

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¶6. (C) Moscovici asserted that France under a PS administration would be "neither Blair nor Chirac." France viewed itself as fully European, and, unlike the UK, not as a bridge between the U.S. and Europe. But it was incumbent on the U.S. and France despite certain differences to maintain at all times a constructive dialogue. They should strive to find agreement whenever possible, he continued, citing specifically Darfur, Iran, Afghanistan, and Kosovo, as well as France's membership in NATO. Of course, France would sometimes oppose U.S. policy, such as on Iraq. Even then, however, it would be important to keep talking, without lies and dissimulation. The U.S. should also understand that a PS administration would want more than the center-right to "Europeanize" France's foreign policy. While proud of France's status as a UNSC permanent member, the PS understood that it could not act on its own and therefore needed ESDP. In that regard, speaking personally, Moscovici said he hoped France would not only maintain, but increase current defense expenditure levels. Ambassador Nuland welcomed French leadership in that regard, adding that Europe also needed French leadership. She urged Moscovici to view NATO not as a U.S.-owned vehicle, but one in which France was also a large stakeholder.

¶7. (C) Asked about the weight of security policy issues in the upcoming elections, Moscovici said that French voters were more motivated by domestic concerns. He noted that that U.S. emphasis on anti-terrorism was not shared by the French public, which did not view itself as a target. Moreover, there was currently great skepticism toward the EU as well as the U.S., whereby PS voters were generally much more negative than the party leadership and would need to be led toward more positive attitudes toward the EU and the U.S. Moscovici assured Ambassador Nuland that all the main Socialist candidates -- Jospin, Strauss-Kahn, and even former Culture Minister Jack Lang -- were reasonable and realistic on this count. He indicated, however, that he could not speak for Segolene Royal, given that her positions on the issues were still largely unknown. (Comment: Moscovici is not a

Segolene Royal supporter. End comment.)

¶8. (C) Ambassador Nuland concluded the meeting by extending an invitation to the PS presidential candidate's foreign policy advisor to visit Brussels and become more personally familiar with NATO. Moscovici pledged to remain in touch, cautioning that an election team probably would not be formed until the end of the year, after the selection of the party's candidate.

¶9. (C) Comment: In discussing transatlantic relations, Moscovici tended to speak in terms of the U.S. and the Europe. The meeting nonetheless served a useful purpose in sensitizing PS officials to NATO issues and, through Ambassador Nuland's active pursuit of a meeting with party officials on both sides of the aisle, demonstrated U.S. willingness to engage them on NATO in the run-up to the presidential elections and beyond. End comment.

¶10. (U) This message was cleared by Ambassador Nuland.

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